

Report

Salem Maritime National Historic Site

■ 1.0 Site Description

Salem Maritime National Historic Site (NHS) is located along the waterfront of Salem, Massachusetts, 20 miles north of Boston. It was created in 1938 as the first NHS in the United States “to preserve for public use...certain lands and structures...by reason of their relationship to the maritime history of New England and the United States.” The site documents the development of the Atlantic Triangular Trade during the Colonial era, the role of privateering during the Revolutionary War, and international maritime trade with the Far East that occurred after the Revolution.

The site includes nine acres in a densely developed urban area that contains a number of other tourist attractions, commercial enterprises, and residential neighborhoods. As a result, the NPS works closely with the City of Salem to promote tourism and address a variety of transportation-related issues. The Essex National Heritage Area, which was formed by Congress in 1996 and incorporates all of Essex County, has also become an important partner of the Park in promoting the full range of historic resources in the region.

The Salem Maritime NHS includes the following elements (see Figure 1):

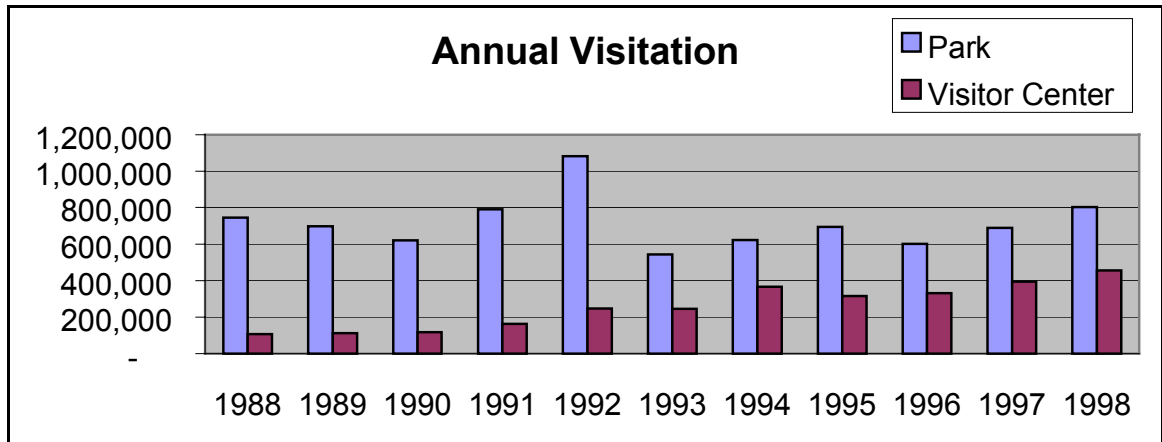
- The main Visitor Center is located on New Liberty Street near the intersection of Essex Street in downtown Salem. The Center was completed in 1994 and orients visitors to the city of Salem and the Essex National Heritage Area, as well as to the NPS facilities. About six blocks separate the Visitor Center from the rest of the site. All other site features are located along Derby Street.
- Derby (1762), Hatch’s (1819), and Central (1791) Wharves are the three remaining wharves from the more than 50 that once existed on the Salem waterfront. They are cleared of the warehouses that once covered them and serve primarily as open space. Central Wharf contains a small satellite Visitor Center located in an old warehouse (1805); the Wharf is also the current site of construction of a full-sized replica of the sailing vessel, *Friendship*, a 1797 merchant ship that sailed from Salem.
- The site includes two additional warehouses, the U.S. Government Bonded Warehouse (1819) and the Hawkes Warehouse (late 1700s). The Hawkes Warehouse was converted to a private home by shipyard owner Benjamin Hawkes in 1801 and is currently used as the Park’s administrative headquarters.
- The Custom House (1819) has been restored and contains a number of exhibits highlighting the U.S. Government’s role in the merchant trade.

Figure 1. Downtown Salem and Salem Maritime NHS

- The Scale House (1829) is located behind the Custom House and contains a large scale similar to those used for weighing maritime cargo.
- The West India Goods Store (circa 1800) sold imported cargoes at retail. A cooperating association, Eastern National, now runs it as a retail store.
- The Derby House (1762) was owned by Salem's most prominent merchant and shipper, Mr. Elias Derby, of the Federal period. It is the oldest surviving brick house in Salem.
- The Narbonne-Hale House dates from the latter part of the 17th century. It is currently unfurnished and is preserved by the NPS as a research site and for interpretive programs.
- The Polish Club (1909) served as a cultural and social center for the many Polish immigrants who have settled in Salem since the early part of the 20th century. The NPS has requested funding to renovate the building, but Congress has not yet approved it.
- The Derby Wharf lighthouse was completed in 1871 and is the only remaining structure on the Wharf.

Visitation to the Salem Maritime NHS has varied significantly through the 1990s. Visitation trends for the Park and the Visitor Center between 1988 and 1998 are shown in Figure 2. The highest year recorded was 1992 when visitation reached 1.08 million; visitation fell to a low of 543,000 visitors in 1993. Visitation in 1998 reached just over 800,000, the highest year since 1992. In recent years, October has become the peak month, accounting for 25 percent of the year's visitors.

Figure 2. Annual Visitation



Visitation to the Visitor Center is also recorded and has shown a consistent upward trend, with an increasingly higher percentage of NHS visitors using the Visitor Center. In 1993, the year before the opening of the new Visitor Center, visitation was 246,000. By 1998, visitation had increased to nearly 455,000. Part of the success of the Visitor Center is the availability of convenient parking across the street in the East India Street garage. Parking near the Derby Street sites of the NHS has always been limited. A large part of the recent increase has occurred during the month of October, as the number of witch-related tourist activities has increased. In 1998, October visitation was 143,000 or 31 percent of the annual total. August was the second busiest month with 74,000 visitors. The total visitation for June through September was 215,000 or 47 percent of the annual total.

The Salem Maritime NHS is one of a number of attractions in downtown Salem. A 1989 summer season Visitor Survey which included both the NHS and other sites in the City provided the following information:

- Salem draws from a national market, with 56 percent of visitors coming from outside of New England. The survey characterized 16 percent as local visitors (Essex and eastern Middlesex Counties) and another 28 percent as regional (the rest of New England).
- Sightseeing was the overwhelming trip purpose of persons surveyed (87 percent), with eight percent reporting they were visiting friends or relatives.
- Ninety percent (90 percent) arrived by automobile, three percent by train and four percent by bus.

- The vast majority spent less than one day in Salem (80 percent) and another 18 percent spent one to three days in the City. Nearly half of the visitors (49 percent), however, reported the length of their total trip away from home was four days or more.
- Other locations visited on the trip include Boston (56 percent), Rockport (20 percent), Lexington (14 percent), and Lowell (five percent).
- Sixty percent (60 percent) were family groups, 30 percent were friends traveling together and only four percent were part of a tour group. A majority of visitors (65 percent) were visiting Salem for the first time.
- Major factors attracting visitors to Salem were “witches” (84 percent) and early American history (74 percent). The Salem NHS, however, was visited by less than half the survey sample. Attractions in order of visitation were as follows:

– Salem Witch Museum	69 percent
– Pickering Wharf	66 percent
– House of Seven Gables	65 percent
– Essex Street Mall Pedestrian Mall	61 percent
– Heritage Trail	45 percent
– Salem Maritime NHS	42 percent
– Witch House	30 percent

It is likely that the new Visitor Center and the improved level of information provided on the NHS, has increased the percentage of visitors using the site since that time.

The Friendship is a major new attraction that is expected to draw additional visitors to the site. When complete it will be anchored at Derby Wharf and interpretive tours provided for a fee. The ship will be available for periodic sailing trips as well.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Salem’s historic orientation has been to the water; as a result, road access has always been difficult. The City does not have direct access to Boston via limited access highway. Route 128, the closest limited access highway, is reached via two congested arterials, Lowell Street and Route 114.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides four bus routes that serve Salem. These include:

- **Route 450** – Route 450 is an express bus between Salem Depot (the MBTA commuter rail station) and Haymarket Square in Boston with running times of 50 to 60 minutes.
- **Route 451** – Route 451 is a local route that runs between Salem Depot and North Beverly. This route provides the closest MBTA service to the Salem Maritime NHS but is oriented toward local riders, not tourists.
- **Route 458/468** – Route 458/468 is a local route that connects Salem Depot to Danvers Square and a major mall along Route 128.
- **Routes 455/459** – Route 455 runs between Salem Depot and Haymarket in downtown Boston while Route 459 connects to Downtown Crossing in Boston via the Ted Williams Tunnel. Running times are 55 to 60 minutes for Route 455 and 72 to 82 minutes for Route 459.

Bus fare from downtown Boston to Salem is \$2.25. There is also a commuter rail station in Salem, located about one mile from the head of Derby Wharf and about a third of a mile from the Visitor Center. One-way fare to Boston North Station is \$2.50. Schedules and information services for both the bus and commuter rail service are not oriented toward tourists. Since over half the visitors to Salem also visit Boston, there is clearly strong potential to increase use of these services.

A recent Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) addition is water transportation service between Long Wharf in Boston and the Blaney Street dock in Salem. Blaney Street is located off Derby Street about 2,000 feet from the head of Derby Wharf. A private boat operator, Boston Harbor Cruises, runs service between June 19th and October 31st. There are four runs each way before Labor Day and two runs after Labor Day. The trip takes about one hour and 15 minutes each way and one-way fares are \$9.00 for adults, \$7.00 for seniors and \$5.00 for children under 12. Round-trip tickets are discounted at \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for seniors and children. Since the service is seasonal and the first boat does not leave Salem for Boston until 9:00 a.m., the service is oriented primarily toward tourists and occasional travelers. A fifth run, for early morning commuters, has been announced for summer 2000.

A 1990 Transportation Plan for the NHS had identified a need for a shuttle service to link the new Visitor Center with the main portion of the NHS and other attractions along Derby Street. Following the opening of the Visitor Center, the NPS contracted for two shuttle routes that were free to users. The service cost the NHS approximately \$60,000 to \$70,000 per year and was funded out of the operating budget. The service was not considered a success and was dropped after two summers. There were two major reasons for dropping the service. First, ridership was limited and the operating cost of \$3.00 per passenger was not considered acceptable. Second, to the extent that patrons did ride the trolley, the number of pedestrians dropped, which local businesses perceived as negatively impacting their businesses. The NPS does not anticipate resuming this service. Trolley tours, duck tours and bicycle/rickshaw tours are all currently available from private vendors.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

The Salem Maritime NHS has two significant ATS needs – improved information service for use of the MBTA and development of a docking facility within the NHS. Given the large number of out-of-state tourists who begin their trip in Boston, the commuter rail service has potential to serve more visitors. Elements required to accomplish this include:

- Improved information in Boston on schedules and fares; and
- An improved walking environment between the Train Station and the attractions of downtown Salem, including wayside information and directional signs.

The 1990 Transportation Plan prepared for the NHS recommended “promotion of visitor use of MBTA rail service by a marketing approach using a ‘*Salem Discovery*’ package containing rail tickets, visitor guides and literature and a Salem ‘passport.’”

Salem has identified a number of opportunities through its master planning process for the harbor. Salem harbor is a designated port area and the city’s draft Harbor Plan proposes a new wharf for multipurpose marine transportation, including ferries, cruise ships, fishing boats, etc., to attract new businesses to the city. The proposed site is in the area of the power plant and the Blaney Street dock. However, to be eligible for the state funds that are earmarked for the new Salem wharf in the state harbor bond, the land must be in municipal ownership. Currently, that area is in private ownership, and the owners are planning to run their own ferry and transportation services.

The Commonwealth has provided the city with \$225,000 in funding for construction of an accessible mooring and boarding facility for a ferry service. In the absence of other available locations, the NPS has agreed to accommodate the city’s facility temporarily at Central Wharf. Since the city has decided not to run a ferry service in the year 2000, the Service will use the facility to host visiting historic sailing ships. The current construction of the Friendship at Central Wharf precludes other uses until about 2001. Congress has appropriated \$704,000 in Fiscal Year 2000 toward the construction of accessible mooring and boarding facilities at the historic site. The temporary placement of the city’s facility at Central Wharf will give the NPS the opportunity to test that design for accessibility and compatibility with the historic resources. The NPS would like to use the Central Wharf for visiting historic vessels, harbor tour boats, and similarly compatible transportation uses. Service to the Harbor Islands and other north shore communities such as Gloucester could also be provided.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

The development of an information system to encourage use of the MBTA would be a cost-effective method of encouraging use of an existing service. While signing has been greatly improved since the opening of the new Visitor Center, negotiating the streets of Salem continues to be difficult. The large pool of potential visitors in downtown Boston

represent an excellent opportunity to build upon the current market without attracting additional automobile traffic to the City.

Water transportation is another important component of this strategy. Improved water transportation service provides a way for both commuters and tourists to travel to and from Boston without further clogging regional highways. Combined with the opening of the Friendship, use of Central Wharf as a water transportation hub helps to reinforce Salem's traditional ties to the sea.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

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■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Steven Kesseleman, Superintendent, Salem Maritime NHS

Annie C. Harris, Executive Director, Essex National Heritage Area